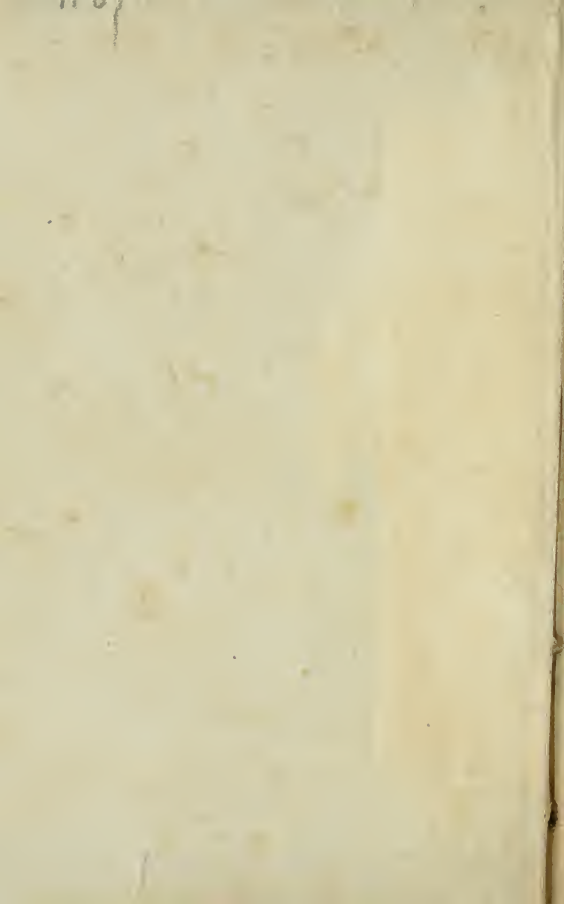


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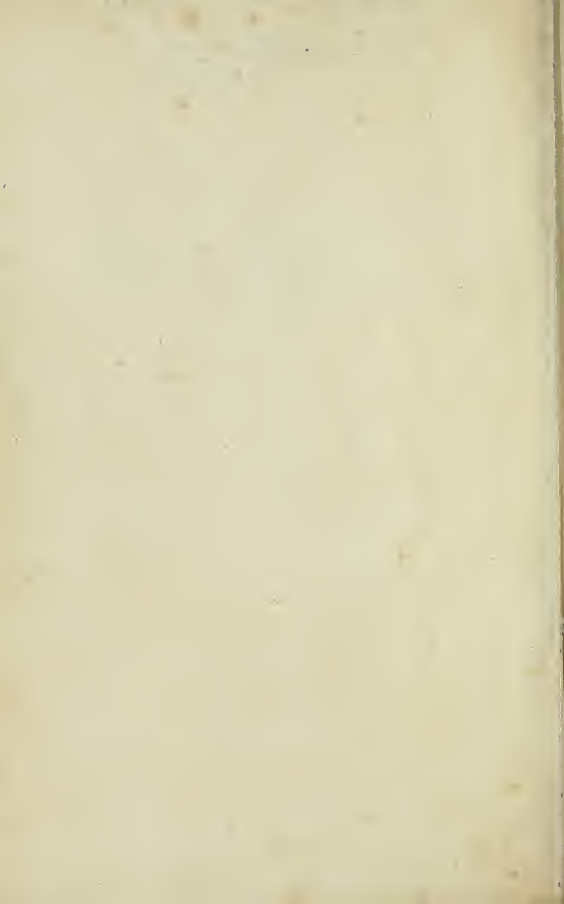
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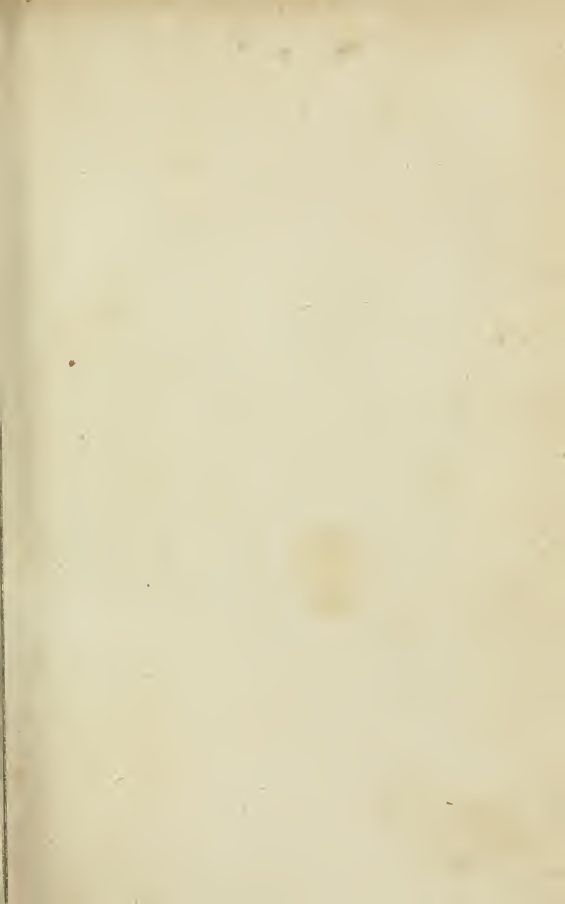


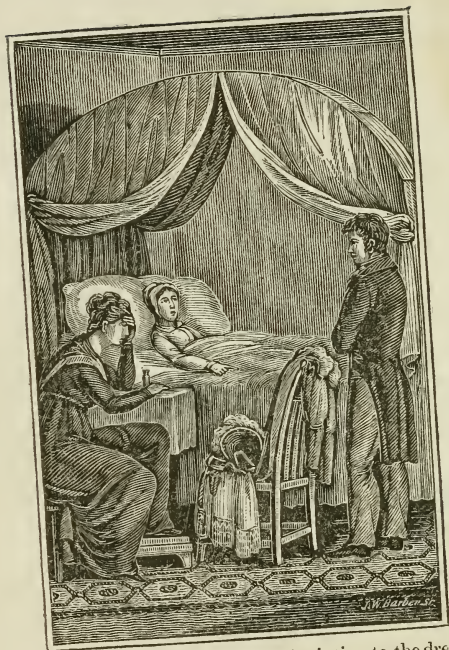
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“There father,” said she, (pointing to the dresses of his procuring,) “THERE IS THE PRICE OF MY SOUL!” p. 61.

LETTERS
TO THE
CONSCIENCE:
OR THE GROUNDS
OF
SOLICITUDE AND HOPE.

BY AMBROSE EDSON,
Late a Pastor of the 3d Congregational Church, Berlin, Ct.

*" I thought on my ways, and turned my feet
unto thy testimonies."*

HARTFORD.
H. F. SUMNER & CO.
1835.

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To the people of my former,* and more recent
pastoral charge, this volume is inscribed, as
a testimony of affectionate regard, and of
an ardent desire to promote their spir-
itual good, and the eternal welfare of
those who still remain out of the
ark of mercy;—by their former
Pastor, and faithful friend,

THE AUTHOR.

* Brooklyn, Conn.



PREFACE.

THE design of this little volume is, with the blessing of God, to promote the conversion of sinners, and the salvation of souls. With this in view, the first object has been to awaken an interest on the subject of religion, by a proper exhibition of important truth; and then so to deepen that interest into solicitude, for the welfare of the soul, that, by the presentation of the claims of God, in the gospel, the sinner may be led by the Spirit, to yield up the controversy, and give his heart to God. The latter part of the volume was designed to afford him some simple tests, by which, to try his character, and hope. It would have been easy, to have enlarged the work, by giving a fuller exhibition of the grounds of "solicitude and hope;" but it was thought that this would not be likely to increase its usefulness; for, by enlarging its size, some for whom it was especially designed, might be deterred from the undertaking of giving it a perusal.—With the present, and it is thought, natural arrangement of the subjects of the volume, the

author, in the filling up, has seized upon those points, only, which seemed most important, or best adapted to produce the desired impression on the mind; and has designed to press them upon the conscience, with as much simplicity, clearness, and urgency as he was capable. Whether he has been successful in this effort, he, of course, is not the proper judge.

If this volume is adapted to promote the object designed, it must depend, principally, upon the efforts of those who love the prosperity of Zion, and pray for the salvation of souls, to give it the opportunity of doing extensive good. To every professing Christian, then, into whose hands this work may fall, let me say, first *read it through yourself*; and then loan it to some impenitent friend, whose salvation you desire, and for which, you will plead with God in prayer. And when it has delivered its message to him, place it in the hands of another, and another, until it is worn out, in so good a cause. If an individual can be persuaded to read the first Letter, attentively, it is hoped that he will not feel disposed to lay down the book immediately. In a time of excited interest on the subject of religion, it is believed, that Pastors, in its circulation

among their flocks, will find it an important auxiliary, in advancing the cause, for which, with so much solicitude, they are laboring, and praying.

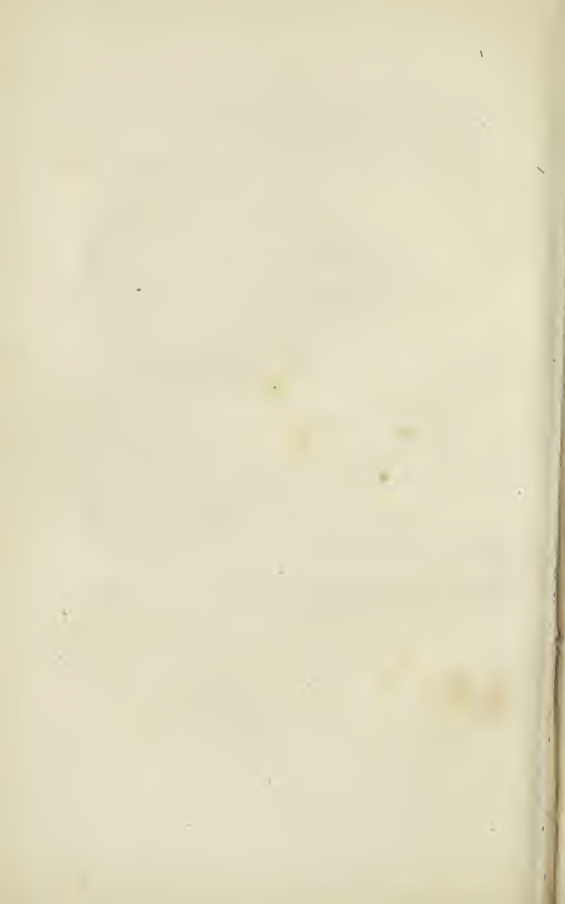
In regard to the *Theology* of the volume, the author has designed to divest it of every thing which should appear like a *polemical* spirit and character;—and he is not aware, that there will be found any thing, in this little manual, particularly objectionable to his brethren in the ministry, who suppose they differ much from each other, on some minor points, in Theological debate. It is not designed to advance the cause of any party, but that of Jesus Christ; or help settle any controversy, but that of the sinner against God. Nor is it designed for literary effect; but for practical usefulness; adapted to the capacity of all who are willing *to think*. That the work is as perfect as it might be, is not pretended; and should another edition be called for, it is the design, to revise, and make it better adapted to promote the object for which it has been prepared. But for the present, with all its faults, the volume is sent forth into the world, with the sincere prayer of the author, that, although laid aside, in the providence of God, from the public ministra-

tions of the sanctuary, he may yet, in his feeble health, be instrumental in promoting the salvation of dying men.

February, 1835.

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LETTERS
TO THE
CONSCIENCE.

LETTER I.

TO THE READER.

I HAVE supposed that this little volume would probably fall into the hands of two classes of persons; those who profess a hope that they are real Christians, by the renewal and sanctification of their hearts and those who cherish no such hope. To the former, let me say, I hope the perusal of these pages may prove profitable, in leading to self-examination,—to a closer walk with God, and a more active devotedness to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom; whilst

I acknowledge, that, to the latter class, I have had special reference in the preparation of this little manual. It is in *your* welfare, my dear friend, if you are living without a well grounded hope of enjoying the favor of God, that I feel a deep interest. I have addressed many such from the sacred desk,—and now, that I can do this no longer, suffer me to address a few considerations, through the eye, to the consciences of those whom I have not seen, as well as those whom I have, who are ready to admit, that they are not Christians. Fellow travellers to eternity, I know you wish to die the death of the righteous, and hope, in some way, that you shall at last find admission to the kingdom of heaven; but this does not appear to be a matter of such *present* urgency, as to call forth much interest on the subject. I shall not, at present, attempt to account for this; but would rather offer some considerations, showing that it ought not so to be,—*that there is ground for solicitude*, respecting

the salvation of the soul. This is the point, to which I wish, for a few moments, to call your attention.

THERE IS GROUND FOR SOLICITUDE.

To be satisfied of this, let me ask you, to look at *yourself*. You are a *creature*,—an *intelligent* being,—raised above the lower orders of creation. You have reason and conscience, which they have not; and hence you are made capable of understanding duty, and feeling the force of moral obligations. As you are a *creature*, so you have a *Creator*, who has given you existence, and who upholds you in existence every moment you live. But this Being stands in another relation to you besides that of Creator, and Preserver,—it is that of *Lawgiver*, and *moral Governor*. Of those,—whom he has given existence, and whom he sustains in existence every moment, he has a right to make requirements. These requirements, if he is reasonable, will also be reasonable; and if they are,

how evident appears the obligation to obey? It does not need a revelation to teach us, that the very relation, which children bear to their parents, places them under obligation to obey those parents. But what have parents done for their children, compared with what God has done, and is doing, for all his creatures? With what additional force, then, may his claims to obedience, be urged? But when we look at his character, as perfectly wise, righteous, benevolent, and holy,—and learn that his law, or his requirements, have the same impress,—where is there a creature that can feel, for a moment, but that such a law, of such a Being, ought to secure the respect, and cheerful obedience, of every creature which he has formed. But it has not.—There are those who have transgressed the laws of this Being, who is glorious in holiness,—the perfection of excellence,—who has given them existence, and holds them in life. They have risen in rebellion against his authority. And this *you* have

done, fellow sinner. I do not accuse you of any outbreking sin, by which you have forfeited the respect of the world around you. But still, in thought, word, and deed, you have done that which God has forbidden, and refused to do that which he requires. And if you had done this, in but a single instance, you would be a sinner against this God. But you cannot count a thousandth part of the sins, of which God has seen you guilty,—as regular, and moral, as you have been. Now, is it possible to think of this, and connect, with it, the unspotted holiness of God's character, without feeling, that there is cause for solicitude, in the case of every sinner?

THE PENALTY.

But further, God has not only given his creatures a law, which has been violated,—but there is a *penalty* that has been incurred; a penalty, which shows just how God feels towards sin, and how he is determined

to treat it: "Whoso keepeth the whole law, and offendeth in but *one point* is guilty." "CURSED is every one that continueth not in *all* things written in the book of the law to do them." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." There is a meaning to this curse, when God pronounces it.—It will show the estimate which he puts upon his law; and this, recollect, is for a *single* transgression. It is not, "cursed are those who continue, all their lives, to trample upon the commands of the ever blessed God,"—but "who do not, in *all* things, obey." I have said that this curse means something. It is the "wrath of God,"—a God of holiness, justice, and Almighty power, who does not trifle with mere threats. But we cannot comprehend the full amount of evil, which is implied in the displeasure of a holy God, threatened against sin; any more than we can comprehend the full amount of bliss, which "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered the heart of man," which God will

bestow upon the righteous. It may be said of the former, as well as the latter, that "none, but he that feels it, knows." But there is enough in that imagery of wrath, which God has employed in his word, to describe the fearful condition and prospects of the wicked, to awaken solicitude. The penalty for a single sin, is the wrath and curse of God,—and when millions of ages shall have passed away, in a hopeless, unending exile from God, and happiness, it will still be—"WRATH TO COME." What then must be the result, when the sinner has been "*treasuring up* wrath against the day of wrath," by the multiplied offences of years!! What "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" must be its amount? Can any one think of this, and think too, it is that to which *he* is exposed, if he is still out of Christ, and yet avoid feeling that there is ground for solicitude? This is the penalty which God has affixed to sin, to show how he regards it. And He is not a man that he should lie. Hath he

said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

But there is another thought: this penalty, which God has annexed to sin, can never be removed, by any subsequent obedience. This obedience is demanded by the law, and was, before the sin was committed. Should the sinner, therefore, obey the law perfectly, after the first transgression, it does not remove the penalty for that one sin. That stands registered in God's book; and there it will stand, notwithstanding all that the sinner can do to blot it out. Let the *murderer* lead a life ever so regular, and honest,—he remains a murderer still; and the only way for him to meet the penalty, is to *suffer* it!—It is so with the sinner. So far as the *law* is concerned, the moment he commits the first sin, all title to heaven is annihilated,—and he becomes an heir of perdition, that is hopeless, and endless: from which no subsequent obedience can deliver him. Oh! is there not ground for solicitude?

But this is not all. This penalty which is incurred, may at any moment be inflicted. In the case of the capital offender, the execution of the sentence of the law, is often postponed for several months, and the postponement announced by the judge. In this case, the criminal feels that he has a guarantee, that the sentence shall not be executed, until that time arrives. But suppose the sentence of death be pronounced, but, of the time, the criminal is not informed,—with what different feelings will he now look upon his situation? ‘It is true, says he to himself, I *may* not be executed within a month, or even six months,—but I *may* too, be living out my last day on earth! Even the turning of the key, and that distant tread, which I hear, may be that of the executioner, coming to lead me forth to my doom!’ Oh sinner, though you *may* live, for months, or years,—still, is not the fearful *uncertainty*, connected with your acknowledged want of preparation for death, enough to awaken solicitude on the sub-

ject of your immortal interests? Can you lay your head upon your pillow, conscious that you are unprepared for death, and not knowing but you may awake in eternity,—without trembling at the thought!

There was a most solemn, and impressive charge, brought against Belshazzar, by the prophet:—"The God in whose hand thy *breath* is, and whose are *all thy ways*, hast thou not glorified." What a thought,—that the sinner's *very breath* is in God's hand,—and in the hand of an *offended God* too,—whose law is transgressed, and whose mercy and forbearance are daily abused! Will He not *strike*! Will he let the sinner keep on *breathing* thus!!

O fellow sinner, if I had really made up my mind, that God should not have my services, and my heart, I should want to take myself off, where his eye could not see me,—where his hand could not reach me, and stop my *breathing* when he pleased! There is no *contending* with OMNIPOTENCE,—no,—*flight* is the only expedient

left. But flight!—ah! where? If I should ascend up to heaven, God is there; if I make my bed in hell, he is there! If, swifter than the beams of the morning, I could fly to the utmost limits of space, God would be there too, before me; and my “breath” would still be in his hands! O sinner what can be done?

But what is it that has so arrayed the sinner against God,—and God against the sinner? It is SIN. “Nothing but *sin!*” do you say? That is enough. For it is the transgression of law;—the law too, of the God of the universe. It consists in the *doing* of what he forbids; or the *refusing* to do what he demands. And this is a *voluntary* doing, or refusal to do. Otherwise no blame could be attached to the act. It is, therefore, a *voluntary violation of obligation*. But this implies that the sinner had all the *power*, or *capacity* for obedience, which was needed. If he had not, the law making the demand, was unreasonable; and could impose no obligation;

and hence, in failing to comply, no obligation is violated, and therefore no sin committed. But further, in relation to sin,—duty was either known, or might have been known, by the sinner. In either case, he is without excuse.

Viewed in this light, sin is not a small matter. It is open voluntary rebellion against God; direct and wilful resistance to His claims; and an utter disregard to His authority, and this too, by a *creature* to whom he has given being,—and whom he holds in being every moment. The sinner knows his duty, or might know it; and can perform it if he will; but he *will not*;—will not, when the God in whose hand his breath is, demands it! I wonder that God should let a sinner live a single day in His world!—wonder that He did not send the first sinner of our race, and every subsequent one, to hell, as soon as they had raised the standard of rebellion against him, just as he did the devil and his angels; and thus confine them *all* in chains, under

darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. Had he done this, justice only would have been executed, and all heaven would have said, *Amen*.

But God has devised a method by which he can connect mercy with justice, and therefore spares the sinner for a time, and places him in a situation in which he may be saved from deserved wrath, if he will comply with the most reasonable conditions. But if the sinner *will* not do this,—and lives, and dies in this refusal, and goes to the judgment unreconciled to God; what would holy, witnessing beings think of God, if he did not *execute* the sentence, “Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!” If there is a “*double* damnation” would not such sinners deserve it? The testimony of God, assures us that the heathen “are without excuse;” how much more, sinners in a Gospel-land? Fellow sinner, if you have not given up your heart to God, while he has been sparing you so long, in the midst of so many means

and mercies, can you feel satisfied and quiet? Is there not ground for solicitude? As a subject of God's moral government, and a transgressor of his law, incurring its fearful penalties, without the Gospel, your condition would be absolutely hopeless. But *with* the Gospel in your hands, if you remain where you are, a little longer, will it not be better for you, if you had never known the way of life; if you had been sent to hell with but the weight of a *single*, and that your first sin, to sink your soul in its woes? If the guilt of sin, my dear friend, is measured by the light resisted in its commission, O what must be the amount of yours? Can you rest a single day,—a single hour, where you are?

THE SINNER'S PLEAS.

But there are several pleas, which may be suggested to the minds of my readers, connected with this branch of the subject, which I feel bound to notice in this place.

1. "I am not a *great* sinner." Your guilt, I admit, may be less than that of some others. But this is not the first, and principal question for you to settle; but have you ever *sinned at all*?—in but "*one point*?" And if you have, are you not already under condemnation? Has not God written "*Cursed*," upon your condition and prospects? And, moreover, if you look at God's character, and then at what sin is, can you feel that *any* sin, against such a Being, is a *small* sin?—And could you get but a glance at a single page, of God's book, to see the record which He has made against you for a single week or day, would you feel like calling yourself a *small* sinner?

2. "But, allowing that I have sinned in some instances, still I have done a great many good deeds, to balance my misdoings."

But, dear friend, there is no such thing, as balancing sins, by good deeds. You have performed no good deeds, which you were

not under obligation to have performed, if you had never sinned. How, then, could their performance be any balance to your sins? As well might a debtor claim, that, because he had paid more debts of his contracting, than what remain unpaid, therefore, the balance was in his favor. Suppose a capital offender should attempt to balance his crime, in the same way—and claim, that as he had obeyed the law oftener than he had broken it, he *ought to be acquitted!*—What would you think of such a plea? But

3. It is said, “it is not in the *power* of any man to obey God, perfectly; and He does not expect it.”

But if by “power” be meant any natural capacity, which is necessary to qualify a man to do his duty, if he is disposed; or the want of which, is any excuse, the declaration is not true. It is a foul libel on God’s character; and I should be much less astonished, to see an individual who should make it, smitten by the lightning of God’s wrath, than to see Ananias and

Sapphira, falling dead at the apostle's feet, for their crime. If the alledged want of "power," be any thing, which, in the least excuses;—the declaration is shocking impiety:—if it does not excuse, the plea is without force, and meaning. God require that of a creature, for the doing of which he had given him no power, or capacity! Dare you bring such a charge against your God, fellow sinner?

But it is said, God does not *expect* that man will obey him perfectly. But this is not the sinner's rule of duty, even if he could prove its truth. The question which he must meet at the bar of God, is not, what God *expects*; but what He has *required*,—and had a *right* to require. With this, before him, surely the sinner could not have the audacity to tell God, that He did not *expect* him to obey Him perfectly!

4. "But God is *above* noticing, very particularly, the actions of men on his footstool: He has other more important business to attend to."

But, if it is not beneath the regard of God, to *create* men, and *sustain* them in life, is it beneath his dignity to regard their conduct, especially when that conduct is open rebellion against his authority and government? If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice and permission, and the very hairs of our heads are all numbered; is there not a fearful probability that God will notice, and remember all our sins, and bring up the whole catalogue to our view, in the day, in which he will judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ?

5. "But God is merciful, and hence I have but little occasion for solicitude."

It is admitted that God is merciful:—that you have been permitted to continue to live, in the midst of your rebellion, is proof that God is merciful. That he has given his Son to die for your redemption, and has so long been pressing his entreaties and admonitions upon you,—"*Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die!*"—"he that *believeth* shall be saved, but he that *believeth not*, shall

be damned;"—and, that he is still waiting to be gracious, is abundant proof that God is merciful. But you have abused all this mercy. And you are this moment standing out against all the motives that can be drawn from three worlds, to lead you to comply with the offers of grace. Live so, and die so,—and the fact that God has been merciful, will be a source of no consolation to you, in eternity! No, fellow sinner, it will be the bitterest ingredient in your cup of wretchedness. It will impart to your perverseness, its damning energy, that you have resisted all the counsels of a benevolent God, in making your way to hell!

Then

"Stop! poor sinner, stop and *think*,
Before you further go."

Is there a single plea which you can now offer, to quiet your conscience, upon which you will dare to risk your soul, at the judgment seat? O, is there not OCCASION FOR SOLICITUDE?

LETTER II.

THE CLAIMS OF GOD IN THE GOSPEL.

THE PROVISIONS OF GRACE.

IN the previous letter, I have attempted to show the reader, that while remaining unreconciled to God, as a subject of his moral government, and a transgressor of his law, there was ground for deep, and affecting solicitude, in regard to the welfare, and interests, of the immortal soul.— If, dear reader, this is your condition, and you do not deeply feel the importance of the subject, let me affectionately ask you, to re-peruse that letter, and open your heart to the convictions of truth, before you read another page of this. But if you do, in a measure, feel the force of those considerations, you may be prepared to

listen to further counsel. No one can be expected to apply for a remedy, who does not feel that he is diseased. And the remedy, which God has provided in the gospel, will never be properly appreciated, till the sinner feels that he is in a ruined, lost condition, by sin.

With this fact in view, I have called your attention to your condition, dear reader, as related to God, and his law. You have seen, that for *one* sin, you have incurred the penalty of the law,—the eternal wrath of God,—and this penalty, you can never remove, by any obedience which you can render.

But God has devised a plan, by which *he* can dispense with the execution of the penalty on *you*, provided you comply with certain conditions, which he has prescribed. And this plan was, to give up his own Son, to be made a sin-offering, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sin,—so that God could be *just*, while he should justify those, who would believe on the

Lord Jesus Christ. From this scriptural statement of the nature, and object, of the atonement, we see that, without the *death* of Christ, God could not *righteously*, forgive the sinner, or be just to the interests of his kingdom, while he pardoned any.—But now, in consequence of his atonement, the door of mercy is thrown wide open, and all the guilty race of Adam, are invited to enter. “Whosoever *will*, let him take of the water of life freely;”—“Look unto *me*, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved.” These, and all the offers of mercy, are based upon the atonement of Christ.

Without this, God could not, consistently with a regard to his law, or authority, or the interests of his great moral kingdom exempt the sinner from deserved wrath, and receive him into favor.

But now he can do it. And this is the “good news,” meant by the very term *Gospel*. It comes to men with proposals for a reconciliation to God, and the offer of the eternal joys of his blessed kingdom.—

But what are its *demands*? What are the conditions, upon which, all this is offered to the sinner? This is the subject, to which I wish, for the present, to call your attention.

THE DEMANDS OF THE GOSPEL.

The two duties most prominently demanded, as conditions of salvation, are *repentance* for sin; and *faith* in Christ.

1. REPENTANCE. This is a feeling of *guilt*, or *blame*, for having done wrong; and a *sorrow* for it. And as sin is committed against God, so repentance, is said to be "*repentance toward God.*" And this is a *reasonable* duty. If God had never demanded repentance, as a condition of salvation, it would, still, have been the duty of all men, every where, to repent.

The child need not wait till his parent commands him to be sorry for his disobedience, before he is under obligation to be so; the obligation exists as soon as he offends, and knows the fact. It is so with the sinner. If God had never published

any Gospel ; and had never promised pardon upon condition of repentance, still the sinner would have been, just as *really*, under obligation to be sorry for having done wrong, in disobeying God, the best Being in the universe, as he is now. The obligation does not rest upon the fact, that he can be saved if he repents; whether he can be saved, or not, he ought to repent; because it is a duty, which he owes to his Creator, Preserver, and Lawgiver, for having disobeyed his reasonable demands. And there is not a fallen spirit in perdition, who is not under the same obligations to be sorry, for having disobeyed God.—Whether he would be benefited by it, or not, has nothing to do with the *basis* of obligation. Nor does this rest on the simple fact that God has commanded it; but he has commanded it, in the case of the sinner, because it is right; because in the very nature of the case, he ought to be sorry for having voluntarily done that which is wrong.

But further, repentance is a reasonable duty, because it is one way in which *love* to God, will, necessarily, be manifested, as soon as it exists. Love cannot exist, in the bosom of the child, without leading him to be sorry for having disobeyed his parent. This is the way in which it shows itself, when an offence has been committed. The reason why Peter went out, and wept bitterly, for having denied his Master, was, he *loved* that Master, and he could not think of what he had done, without weeping.— And the moment the sinner begins to love God, will he repent, or be sorry, for having done wrong. It is impossible to separate love and repentance, in the breast of the sinner.

But further, while a person refuses to be sorry for his offence, he does, in effect, justify himself, in it. Let a child *tell* his parent that he is not sorry for his disobedience, and if that parent profess to forgive him, and be reconciled to him, while in that state of feeling, he must in reality, as

well as in the view of that child, sacrifice his authority, as a parent. And if the sinner is not sorry for his sins, God knows it,—and if He should receive him into favor, while thus refusing to repent; would it not be, at a sacrifice of his authority as a moral Governor,—and a *sanction* of the sinner's rebellion? How much weight would be attached to the law, in view of His subjects, if it were known, that they might trample upon it, without calling forth his displeasure? God would cease to be loved, or respected. But by demanding sorrow for sin, God means that the sinner shall *feel*, as well as acknowledge, that he has been in the wrong, and be humbled for it, before he will grant him any tokens of reconciliation. In this view of the subject, how reasonable, appears the demand for repentance. Does there not appear to be a moral fitness, in the declaration of Christ, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish?" Could we expect less, than that God should "now command all

men, every where, to repent?" And if men will not be really *sorry* that they have disobeyed God; and that, because it is *wrong*,—a violation of obligations the most sacred, that can exist in the universe, —without any thing to palliate their guilt; do they not deserve PERDITION?

It is a fearful controversy that the sinner is waging with his Maker, and it is most obvious, that either God, or the sinner, must yield. God, in demanding repentance, requires that the sinner should lay down his weapons, *instantly*; to this point He is urging him, by his word, his providence, and his Spirit; but the sinner will not relent; he has done wrong, but he is not sorry for it! O, I wonder that God does not smite him down, and send him instantly to hell! What a miracle of forbearance!—that He should let him live a moment in His world; and especially that he should condescend to reason with him, and urge him to repent, and make his peace with HIM.

Fellow sinner, have you never yielded your heart to God? Has it never melted, at the thought of the manner in which you have treated God, and his requirements? how you have disobeyed him, and refused to be sorry for it, because it is so wrong, so unreasonable, so wicked? Lay down your book, before you read another page, and drop on your knees, before your offended God, and tell him, that you have done wrong, and that you are sorry for it, and beg him for Christ's sake to forgive you; and do it *sincerely repenting* of your sins, and the controversy between you, and God, will be ended, and He will smile upon your soul; and then, O what joy there would be in heaven, because another sinner had repented! Will you do it now?

But I cannot dismiss this point here; and therefore request your attention to the following

CONSIDERATIONS.

1. God, unconditionally demands repent-

ance "*now*." He "now commandeth all men every where to repent." Here are no *provisos*,—no *conditions*,—"all men every where," being sinners, he demands of them, as a matter of *present* duty, the exercise of sorrow for their sins. No exceptions are to be made, and no postponement for any other duty, or business; *now*,—NOW, is the time for its performance. And,

2. There is present occasion for repentance. The occasion for repentance is *sin*. That has already been committed. It has been increasing its amount, and aggravation, for years. If you are not what the world calls immoral; yet, weighed in the balance of the sanctuary,—"*TEKEL*" must be written against you. The guilt, for having lived so many years, without giving your heart to God, and for resisting so many calls, and warnings, to make your peace with your Maker, is enough to sink your soul to the very abyss of woe. O is there not present *occasion* for repentance? But I remark

3. That there is present *capacity* for re-

pentance. I am aware that there are some, who attempt to persuade themselves, that Adam was created with full capacity to obey God's law, perfectly; but that he lost this capacity, by the fall; and that all his posterity come into the world really unable or without any capacity to obey this law perfectly; and yet, although the race have lost all ability, to obey the law, in this manner, still God has not lost his right to require obedience. The ability existed in Adam before he fell, but it has never existed since! and yet, God still continues to demand obedience, just as positively, and solemnly, as if men had all the capacity needed to obey!!! This is a sufficiently appalling representation of God's character, it must be confessed.

But in relation to repentance, it cannot be said that men have *lost* their ability to repent, by the fall. If they have not that ability now, they never had it; for this is not a duty prescribed to man in innocence; the capacity for which, could

be lost by sinning; but to man as *guilty*,—as having already fallen; and therefore it was with just the powers, and capacities which fallen beings possess. And if men have not all the power, necessary, they never had it;—and God knew it, and yet demanded that they should repent, under the penalty of eternal damnation!

But does it need any more power, to exercise repentance towards God, than it does to be sorry, for any other wrong, which you have done? You know that you have done *wrong*, and that you are *to blame* for it; what more, or different power, do you need, to be *sorry*, than the child does, who has disobeyed his parent? or than the man does, who has injured his neighbor? And suppose that either, of these, should acknowledge that he had done wrong, and was to blame for it; but should assert, in addition, that he had no power, or capacity, to be sorry for it? What would you think of such a plea?

But it is asked, *can* a sinner repent, without the influence of the Holy Spirit?

I reply in answer, that the Spirit is not necessary to give *power*, or *capacity* to repent; but to make the sinner *willing* to repent,—willing *to use* the power which he has, to be sorry, in actually being sorry. Here, you perceive, that the only difficulty in the way, is *obstinacy*,—the sinner *will not* yield to God; *will not* come to Christ for life. This is the whole of the difficulty. It is of precisely the same *nature*, with that of the stubborn child, who *will not* be sorry, for having voluntarily and wilfully, disobeyed his parent. And it may be, that he will continue to stand out, until the parent takes some effectual measure to subdue his obstinacy. But still, this does not prove that he *could not* have yielded before; or that he was not under obligation to have yielded before. No new *power* was needed, which he did not before possess. And the fact that the sinner never *will* yield to God, and repent of sin, without the influences of the Holy Spirit, does not touch the question in regard

to capacity or power. It is not *power* that is wanting, but a disposition to use the power which God has given him, as He demands. And there is just as much impudence in the sinner's asking, where shall I get the disposition? as there would be, in the same question, if proposed to a parent by an obstinate child. The cases are precisely as analagous. As *moral agents*, they ought to have the disposition, and they are justly punishable for not having it. To say that they have no power or capacity to be sorry, is to deny that they can *know* that they have done wrong, and *feel* that they are wholly to blame for it. And to deny this, is to deny that they are moral agents, and thus shield them from all responsibility, and moral obligation. No, fellow sinner, if God should never give his Spirit to you, it would not affect either your obligation, or full capacity to repent, immediately. These would remain entire; and *must* remain entire, while you remain

a moral agent. The fact that you would certainly refuse to repent, and would live, and die, in that refusal; only shows your *obstinacy in refusing to yield your heart to God*. However you may now attempt to quiet your conscience, with the plea that you have no power to repent, without the influence of the Holy Spirit; you never will open your mouth with such a plea, at the bar of God!

But, entire as is your capacity to repent, without the influence of the Spirit,—God has not left you, in this state. He has given his Spirit, to warn you of danger, and urge you to give up your heart to him. And you have *resisted* his influences, and refused to yield. What plea, then, can you make, that will not condemn you? Recollect that God demands repentance "*now*," that there is present *occasion* for repentance; and present *capacity* to comply with God's demand. Let me add another consideration,

4. That you can perform no external re-

ligious duty, acceptably to God, while you neglect, or refuse to repent. This truth appears so plain, that I can hardly persuade myself it needs illustration. How would *prayer* be regarded by God, without penitence for sin? Suppose you pray for repentance,—in other words, that God would *make you sorry*, for doing that, which you know to be wrong, and for which, you are not sorry, and stand out in refusing to be sorry! If a child should go to his father, and tell him that he had done wrong, in disobeying him, but he was not sorry for it; and then add “father will you not make me sorry?” would not the father feel, and have occasion for feeling, that the child intended to insult him? And does it alter the nature of the transaction, that, while the sinner *refuses* to be sorry that he has sinned against God, he should yet go, and pretend to ask God to make him sorry? Would not God regard it as solemn mockery?

But, suppose he should pray for pardon? If he was penitent for his sins, the bestow-

ment of pardon, might be consistent. But with what face can he ask God to *forgive* him, while he is not sorry for his sins,—while he refuses to lay down his arms of rebellion, and submit to his authority? What would you think of a child's plea for the forgiveness of his parent, when, at the same time, he acknowledges that he is not sorry for his offence!

But God has not left us to the deductions of reason, to determine how he regards this subject. He has plainly and unequivocally stamped the seal of *reprobation*, upon such hollow-hearted services. “The sacrifices of the wicked are an *abomination* unto the Lord.” They are not merely *sinful*,—but offensive in the highest degree; they are an “ABOMINATION!” “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his *prayer* shall be sin.” This is the light, in which God regards all the external religious services of those, who refuse to exercise repentance for their sin. They are all ABOM-

INATIONS in his sight. Of this, you may complain, fellow sinner. But it is God's own representation of the manner in which he regards the subject.

But, do you ask, shall the sinner neglect to pray, and to perform the other external duties of religion? I answer, no; he is neither to neglect *to pray*, nor *repent*.—He is to perform *every* duty, whether it relates to external acts, or to the feelings of the heart, "*now*;" but to perform them all, *in the exercise of penitence* for sin, and love to the character of God. This is what God demands of every sinner, as a matter of *present* concern. If he does not do it, with this feeling, he is adding *mockery* to rebellion; and there is ground for fearful apprehension, that God will not bear it long! And dare you risk the issue of the controversy, fellow sinner, for another hour? O will you not *now*, drop the weapons of your rebellion, and fall at the feet of mercy, in penitence for your sins? I pause for a reply. * * * *

2. The *second* requirement, which is made as a condition of salvation, proposed to our notice, is FAITH. This term means *trust*,—and hence, *faith* in Christ, is *trust* in him; or a resting on the merits and efficacy of his atonement, alone, as the ground of our acceptance with God. It is seen, from this statement, that Christ is the great object of evangelical, or saving faith.—Hence, the force of the apostle's language, as containing the substance of his preaching; “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance *toward* God, and *faith* TOWARDS our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Christ has stepped in, between the sword of justice, and the sinner; and by the sacrifice of himself, has made it consistent with God to pardon all who repent of sin, and believe in him. If saved, therefore, they must be saved by him; or by virtue of what he has done; must be dependent on, and indebted to him for salvation; must be saved for his sake.

From what has already been said, it is

evident that we cannot rest upon any duty, or obedience of ours, as the ground of our pardon, and acceptance. This obedience is just what we should have been under obligation to render, if we had never incurred the penalty of the law for sin. To build our hope of heaven on this, would, obviously, be building it on the sand. But to rest our hope, and our souls, on the atonement of Jesus Christ, as the ground of our acceptance with God, is *believing* on him, as the Gospel demands. This is the corner-stone, on which it is safe to build for eternity. This is what Christ meant, when he said, "I am the *way*." "No man cometh to the Father but *by me*." Now, we cannot refuse thus to believe in Christ, without casting contempt on the provision, which God has made for our salvation, and rejecting the only overtures of mercy, that will ever reach us. It is no wonder, therefore, that the declaration should be so explicit; "He that *believeth* shall be saved; but he that *believeth not* shall be damned."

These are the duties, my dear reader, demanded as a condition of salvation.—Perform them—repent of sin, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,—and you are a Christian. Refuse to do this, and you are not only not a Christian, but a candidate for all that woe, which God will pour out, without mixture on all the finally impenitent. God is waiting for your compliance. O will you not

“Seize the kind promise *while it waits*,
And march to Zion’s heavenly gates;
Believe, and take the promised rest,
Obey, and be forever blest?”

LETTER III.

ON GRIEVING THE SPIRIT.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SPIRIT MAY BE GRIEVED.

To decide, intelligently, in what *way* the Spirit may be grieved, and learn where the danger lies, it is necessary to ascertain what the Spirit would lead us to do; and this brings us back to the point—the ground for the necessity of the Spirit's influence, to lead the sinner to repent. It is the *perverseness*, the *obstinacy* of the sinner, and his *unwillingness* to yield his heart to God. This is so great, that, left to himself, not a single child of apostate Adam would ever comply with the conditions of mercy. This does not touch the capacity of the sinner, to comply. That remains entire.

But he *will not* comply. And it is not in the power of truth, alone, urged by the highest eloquence of men, or of Gabriel, that could ever make the sinner yield, or subdue his obstinacy. Hence, when regenerated, men are said to be “born not of blood, nor of the will of the *flesh*, nor of the *will of man*, but of *God*.” In other places they are said to be “born of the Spirit,” because it is by the Spirit, that their obstinacy is subdued, and they, brought to the foot of the cross. And there is nothing but the Spirit, that will do this. He does not impart any new faculty or power, but, simply, makes them *willing*. And this is just what they *ought* to have been, and *might* have been, without, so far as power is concerned, but *would not*. When *willing*, i. e. when they have a disposition for it, repentance is easy, and the whole controversy, is ended. Now, this is what the Spirit would lead every sinner to do. And this is the point, towards which, he is urging them, when he strives. It is to

lead them to give up the controversy with God, and submit, on the terms of the Gospel. And the Spirit is *sincere* in this, and God is sincere, in giving the Spirit for this purpose. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his ways and live. *Turn ye, turn ye*, for why will ye die." Now to *grieve* the Spirit, is to resist his influences, and refuse to comply with the conditions of the Gospel; or to refuse to do just what the Spirit would persuade us to do. This is the way, in which the Spirit may be grieved, by the sinner.

But there is *danger* in grieving the Spirit. God has said, "My Spirit shall not *always strive* with man." There is something deeply impressive in the terms of this declaration. The word "*strive*," seems to denote a kind of conflict. The nature of this, is evident from what has been said above. The Spirit would lead the sinner to a compliance with the terms of mercy; while the sinner is *holding back*, and re-

fusing to yield,—hence, the *strife*. There would be no *striving*, if the sinner were ready to do his duty, when the Spirit was given to him,—any more, than there is, when a parent takes a child by the hand, to lead him to another apartment, and the child goes cheerfully. But the moment the child should begin to hold back, would commence the *strife*,—the parent drawing one way, and the child, the other. God gives his Spirit to *strive* with men. Why does he not withdraw it, and leave the resisting sinner to his own chosen way? He does, reader, sometimes do this; and he gives the warning, in the declaration just alluded to: “My Spirit shall not always strive with man!” This fearful truth he has often illustrated by facts. To a few of these, only, can I allude, at the present time.

ANCIENT SINNERS.

The closing scene of the *antediluvian*

history, stands out in bold relief, as furnishing an illustration of this truth. It was in direct reference to them, that God made the declaration just cited. The period of the Spirit's striving, and God's waiting, came,—the measure of their iniquities was full, and God swept them from the stage of existence by a mighty flood. The overthrow of the *cities of the plain*, furnishes another illustration. When God had determined to wait no longer, they met with a fearful doom, which but faintly prefigured those final flames of divine wrath, to which they are destined, in the coming world.—Look at PHARAOH too,—at the means which God used to lead him to yield to His demands,—at the manner in which those were all abused and perverted, and by their abuse and perversion, how he braced himself up, to a continued resistance to the heavenly mandate, till God buried him, and his hosts, in the depths of the sea! God may, for wise reasons, wait for a time; but the sinner can have no assurance of his

continuing to wait. FELIX too, is another instance in point. Look at him, trembling under the searching influence of truth, as urged by the ambassador of Christ. One would have said, 'thou art not far from the kingdom of God.' The Spirit was striving, but he would not yield. He did not intend to abandon the subject entirely;—but merely to *postpone* it, till a convenient opportunity. With this plea, so plausible, that it served to hush the voice of conscience, he grieved the Spirit to make, probably, a final departure, and he was left to the dominion of his sins. How many a trembling, hesitating, delaying sinner, ought to be warned, by this history, of the danger of grieving the Spirit to leave him, by a postponement of his submission to God, for a single day, or hour. "My Spirit shall not *always* strive!"

SOLEMN WARNINGS.

But a multitude of facts of modern date,

might be quoted, illustrative of the same point. Read the Tract, "Quench not the Spirit," and you will learn the history of an aged sinner, who, while under the strivings of the Spirit, had often promised, at some fixed, future time, that he would attend to the subject of religion;—but, it was postponed from time to time, until, when he was laid upon his dying bed, he found, that that often grieved Spirit had abandoned him forever; and then, O how he urged his grand children, to take warning by his example, not to put off the subject of religion to a future period.

A young lady in a certain town in New-England, about the time of the visit of Lafayette to this country, had her attention aroused to the subject of her soul's concerns, and was deeply anxious, in a time of general awakening, around her. But like many others, she lingered. The nation's guest was to visit this town, and it was feared, by the people of God, that it would prove detrimental to the state of

religious feeling; and there were strong, and earnest entreaties, to the God of prayer, that this result might be prevented. But on the morning of this day, the young lady, mentioned, seemed much distressed respecting what she should do, in relation to witnessing the honors that should be publicly paid to the distinguished benefactor of the country. She felt that they would not be adapted to deepen her religious anxiety, and she was afraid of the result; but, on the other hand, curiosity was excited to see the person, whom the country, so delighted to honor; and the enquiry was very natural, ought we not to show our gratitude to this generous benefactor; and if so, can there be any harm, in appropriating the day to such a laudable object? Her decision was formed,—and, to a young lady in the room, she remarked, with a more brightened countenance than she had, for some time worn, “I have determined to lay aside my seriousness for to-day, and enjoy the visit of Lafayette.” She had but just an-

nounced her purpose, when, on turning to leave the room, she fell, gasped, and expired!! “My Spirit shall not always strive with man!”

In another town, lived an amiable young lady. In the year 1822, a powerful revival of religion visited that place; and in the early part of it, the attention of C——— was called up to the subject of religion. For a few days she was deeply distressed. But this was not of long duration. It was soon evident that she had dismissed her anxiety, and with it, all her seriousness. A sister of her's became a hopeful subject of grace, while C——— had grieved away the Spirit, and was evidently abandoned by this heavenly visitant. Her whole attention was now directed to dress, fashions, parties, &c. This continued for some two years, or more. About this time, her health began to decline,—but it produced no symptoms of seriousness. And it is recollected, that, at a third service, one Sabbath afternoon,—attired in the most *splendid* man-

ner, she made her appearance, and, after seating herself in a conspicuous place, threw off her bonnet, and displayed a head-dress of curls, ribbons, &c., in extravagant profusion, which attracted the attention of almost every individual present. And this was the last meeting that poor C—— attended! Her health declined rapidly,—but her mind was steeled against the influence of truth,—and a consideration of her own precious, and immortal interests;—nay, she was obviously opposed to have the subject introduced, in conversation.—In this state, her minister visited her, and pressed truth, faithfully, upon her attention: but without the least effect. He turned down the leaves, of two or three Hymns, which, he requested she would have read to her, after he had gone. But the minister had no sooner left the room, than she directed her sister,—“turn up those leaves for I do not wish to hear any of his hymns.” Her sister, who had become a hopeful subject of grace, during the revival, often

plead with her, when, confined to her sick and dying bed, she was making her plans about new dresses, &c.,—to think of her soul,—and give up her heart to God. But tears were shed, and entreaties made in vain—except to excite the opposition of her heart. God seemed to have said, “she is joined to her idols, let her alone.” In this state she remained while capable of expressing any feeling, or consciousness. There seemed no relenting, no tender moment,—so far as could be ascertained. The writer was providentially present, during a part of her dying struggles,—and, at the request of the family, prayed for her departing soul,—while some were wringing their hands in anguish, and all the family were sobbing out their griefs. But whether she was conscious of the offering of the prayer, is not known. She struggled for breath a little longer, and died!!! We have no wish to lift the curtain that separates the present, from the future. But there is enough, in this brief history, to

sound a note of warning, in the ear of every awakened sinner, "Grieve not the Spirit!"

"God's Spirit will not always strive,
With hardened, self-destroying man;
Ye, who persist his love to grieve,
May never hear his voice again!"

In another town, in a time of revival, the attention of a young lady was called up to the subject of religion, and she appeared deeply impressed with a view of her guilt, and danger. But the father, though a nominal professor, was hostile to the work; and, perceiving the effect upon the mind of his idolized, and only daughter, forbade her attending the meetings.—But her distress continued, and he sent her from the place, for the purpose of diverting her attention from this subject, by mingling in the society of those who were indifferent; but she returned home, as unhappy as she went away. His next expedient was, to induce her, to give up her seriousness, and join a party of pleasure, by

promises. For this purpose, he made her an offer of the most splendid dress, which he could procure; together with its corresponding appendages, and *et ceteras*, if she would banish her melancholy, and try to be happy. After some hesitation she consented to the proposal, and received from her father, all that he had promised, and dismissed her seriousness effectually. But by and by, Emily, (for so we shall call her,) was laid upon a bed of sickness. Medical skill was called to her relief; but the disease baffled all its efforts. And it was soon apparent, that Emily's end was near. One day, she requested her nurse to bring that new dress, and its accompaniments into her room, that she might see it. It was done as requested, and after having it placed upon a chair, she sent for her father into the room. He came; when his idolized, dying daughter addressed him, with an energy, and solemnity, which showed that she felt what she said; "There father," said she, (pointing to the splendid dresses of his procuring,)

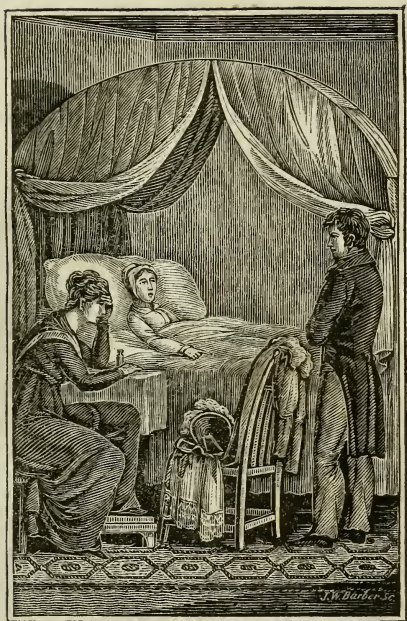
"THERE IS THE PRICE OF MY SOUL! For the sake of enjoying *that*, I grieved the Spirit away from my heart forever, and now I am dying without an interest in Christ, and am *lost*, LOST, FOREVER!" This is only the substance of her dying appeal. But O! does it not say in the ear of every delaying sinner, "*My Spirit shall not ALWAYS STRIVE?*"

"Hath something met *thee* in the path,
Of worldliness, and vanity;
And pointed to the coming wrath,
And urged thee, from that wrath to flee?"

"Sinner,—it was a heavenly voice;—
It was the Spirit's gracious call;
It bade thee make the better choice,
And *haste* to seek in Christ thine all.

"Spurn not the call to life and light,
Regard, *in time*, the warning kind;
That call, thou may'st not *always* slight,
And *yet* the gate of mercy find!

"Sinner,—perhaps this very day,
Thy last accepted time may be;
O! shouldst thou grieve him *now* away,
Then hope *may* never beam on thee!"



"THERE IS THE PRICE OF MY SOUL!"



From what has been said, upon this subject, it must be obvious, that when the Spirit strives with a sinner, it is a solemn *CRISIS* in the history of his being! God is employing his *last* means, to bring him to the foot of the cross,—the last, in point of *kind*,—as, without the influences of the Spirit, all other means would prove unavailing, with any sinner;—and it may be the last in point of *time*,—may be the last visit of this heavenly messenger, to your obdurate, unrelenting heart. Is it not, then, a solemn *Crisis*?

“O! should'st thou grieve him now away,”

may it not,—is there not danger to fear that it will prove to be his farewell visit to thy soul, and that, by this act, you may seal your eternal doom?

But what adds to the solemnity of this subject, is, the sinner may have the Spirit striving with him, and yet, not be sensible of it; i. e. he may be made serious, and

even feel a degree of anxiety, in relation to his immortal interests, and yet not suspect, that this very state of feeling is produced by the Spirit. Sinners are not conscious of any *sensible*, or almost irresistible *impulse*, as they suppose they shall be, when the Spirit strives; and therefore, by those very efforts, which they make to banish those feelings, they are grieving the Spirit to leave them; and this, without intending such a result, because not aware that it is the Spirit which has produced this solicitude. O how often have individuals, in this way, without intending it, put the seal to their final, and everlasting abandonment, by the Spirit,—and hence, to their hopeless perdition! If you *postpone* this subject, fellow sinner, a single day, or hour, it is at a fearful hazard! It will grieve the Spirit, and you

“ May never hear his voice again!”

LETTER. IV.

EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE AND ITS EVIDENCES.

It will be recollected, that the definition which I have given of repentance, is, “a feeling of *guilt*, or *blame*, for having done wrong, and a *sorrow* for it.” Either of these two described feelings may exist separately, but could not thus constitute repentance. Many an individual has been conscious of guilt, or blame, in having performed a certain act, without being at all sorry for it. This, of course, could not be called repentance. On the other hand, it is by no means an uncommon thing, to be *sorry* for events, which have occurred, without any instrumentality of ours; and hence, without any criminality of ours.—We may regret, or be sorry for the exist-

ence of a storm or tempest,—for the prevalence of Cholera, or any other sweeping, providential scourge, with which God visits our fallen world, without feeling that we are personally *guilty* for the prevalence of these. In this, there is no repentance. This must include a feeling of *blame*, or *criminality*; and a *sorrow* for the offence, because it is wrong.

If this definition be correct, it may help us to form a proper estimate of the capacity of the sinner, to obey God's demands, in his law. Is it possible in the nature of the case, that a sinner should feel himself *to blame*, for not doing that, which it was not possible for him to do, on account of the want of capacity? Suppose he was commanded to fly; could he feel a criminality, for not obeying the command? And if men have no more capacity to obey God, than they have to fly, they are no more criminal for not obeying, than for not flying. And if there is no criminality in either case; there can be no repentance

for either. Repentance, then, it is obvious, implies the admission, that we *could* have obeyed God, if we had been disposed; and that we are criminal, to the same degree, for not obeying him. Deny this, and you deny the very foundation, on which repentance, from its own nature, must be based; and annihilate the obligation to repent. With this general statement, in regard to the subject, let me call your attention to some of

THE EVIDENCES OF EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE.

1. Self, *alone*, is condemned, and God is justified.

Just so long as men attempt to frame excuses, either for their sins, or for not giving up their hearts to God, do they show that they have no penitence for sin. The moment this feeling takes possession of their hearts, they will not have one word to say in extenuation. Whoever may have been the occasion of their fal-

ling into sin;—they do not attempt to divide the blame. Self, alone, is condemned, because they feel that it was their duty to have resisted every solicitation, and every temptation. We do not believe that Peter upbraided any one, but himself, for his base denial of his Master. Penitence shuts the mouth, that might be opened for such a purpose. “Against thee, and thee only, have *I* sinned!” God is right, and I am wrong, wholly wrong.—His law is holy, just, and good,—demanding nothing but what was right and reasonable,—and the blame, and the whole blame, for not obeying, is my own. God has long demanded repentance, and the immediate, and unconditional surrender of my heart to Him, and I might have done it,—and ought to have done it; but the whole fault, in not complying, was *mine*. God was right, and I was wrong, wholly, and entirely wrong. This is the spirit that will characterize genuine penitence wherever it exists.

2. Another evidence of genuine repentance is, the renunciation of every known sin. The war that God has waged, and which we must wage, against sin, is a war of *extermination*. No truce is to be made with any. As he who offends in one point, although obedient in every other, brings himself under condemnation; so he that clings to *one* sin, although he gives up every other, is still under condemnation; and can have no evidence of godly sorrow for sin. Let that sin be as dear, and useful to him, as a right hand, or a right eye, it must be given up, or the soul be ruined forever. Just adopt the principle, that we may reserve *one* sin, for indulgence; and we may another, and another; and no one can predetermine, where the line would eventually be drawn. Besides, sin is rebellion against God. To suppose, therefore, that penitence is consistent with holding on, upon a part of this rebellion,—with an unwillingness to forsake the whole,—is palpably absurd. If there is a single

sin, then, which you are unwilling to give up, dear reader, you may safely take it for granted, that your heart is a stranger to evangelical repentance.

3. Another evidence of repentance, is, an honest determination to perform every known duty. If a person cannot sincerely be sorry for sin, without a determination to forsake it; so neither can he be, for the neglect of a known duty, unless he determines to perform it. To illustrate this point, let me state a simple fact. Several years since, in a time of revival, the pastor of a church, in the course of his visits, enquired of the father of a large family, who was not a professor of religion, how he felt towards the subject.—The reply was prompt;—“*I have a hope, Sir.*” Indeed! how long have you thought yourself a Christian? “About ten years.” And if you have so long thought yourself a Christian, why have you never acknowledged Christ, before the world, and obeyed His dying injunction, “this do in remembrance of me?”

“Why, to tell you the truth, sir, there are some members of the church, who have not used me very well,—one of them is Dea. S——. He has conversed with me on the subject of my hope,—and did not seem to think that I was a Christian; and, as he has been one of the Church Committee, who attend at the examination of candidates, I knew he would oppose my being admitted. I have thought of joining a church, in an adjoining town, and conversed with the minister about it, but, somehow, it was never done. And then, again, I wanted to have my wife come forward with me;—but she did not seem to see her way clear,—and, for ten years, I have been waiting for her;—and, as she has, recently, indulged hope,—I trust, now, to have her company.”

But, said the pastor, if you are really a Christian, I should not have thought these excuses would have satisfied you, for so long a time. The fact that some one had used you ill,—if that is the case, would

hardly justify your disobeying Christ.— And, as to waiting for your wife to make a profession of religion, that is a very mistaken view of duty. A husband may, with just as much propriety, wait for his wife to repent, or love God, or pray, before he would do it, as to wait for her to get ready to make a profession of religion, if she is not a Christian.

But to pass over this subject, for the present; in relation to your hope; if it is a good one, it must have led you to do all that you knew to be duty. A hope that will not lead to this, will prove to be but as the spider's web, at last. Now sir, I presume, if you think yourself a Christian, you love the duty of prayer.

“I do not live without praying, sir.”

And I presume, said the minister, that you think family prayer to be a duty, for every Christian head of a family.

“Most certainly,” was the reply.

I presume, then, you have maintained worship in your family, that have been

growing up around you, since you think you became a Christian?

"Why—no—sir,—I have not felt like, really praying in my family."

But, you think it to be a *duty*, for every Christian; if I understood you.

"Why, yes sir, I think it to be a duty, but you know, we are none of us perfect.—we offend in many things, and in all come short."

But do you not intend commencing family worship?

"Why, as to that, I cannot say, exactly."

But, how, dear sir, do you get along with a hope which lets you live, year after year, in the neglect of what you know, and acknowledge, to be, a Christian duty?

"O, sir, I pray that God will forgive me."

But how do you think that God will regard such a prayer? Just look at it, for a moment. You go, and tell God, that you have done wrong in neglecting to pray in your family,—that you are sincerely sorry for it, and ask Him to forgive you. And

suppose God should reply, 'do you intend to commence family worship to-day?'—O, no, you reply, I have not thought of doing it to-day? 'Do you intend doing it to morrow?' I hardly think I shall, you reply. 'Do you intend ever to commence praying in your family?' 'Why, as to that, I cannot say exactly.' Now, my dear sir, what do you suppose God will think of such a prayer? You tell him, you have done wrong, in not praying thus, and that you are sorry for it,—but yet, at the same time, *you do not intend ever to perform that duty*, for the neglect of which, you are so sorry! Would such a prayer be anything less than "ABOMINATION," in the sight of God?

The foregoing is the substance of a conversation which actually took place, some eight or nine years since; and the individual is, for aught I know, in very much the same state, that he was then, as it regards any profession of religion.

I might dwell on several points of this

narration, but I introduced it to illustrate the truth, that a determination to perform every known duty, is an indispensable requisite, as evidence of genuine repentance for sin. If a child should profess to be sorry for not having obeyed a reasonable requirement, and should still *refuse* that obedience,—no one could give him credit for sincerity.

And now, my dear friend, if you do not determine to do all that you know to be duty,—can you have any evidence that you have sincerely repented of sin?

LETTER V.

EVANGELICAL FAITH, AND THE FAITH OF ASSURANCE.

NATURE OF FAITH ILLUSTRATED.

THE faith required as a condition of salvation, is commonly called "evangelical faith." This has been defined in a previous letter. It is such a trusting in Christ for salvation, as is implied in resting the soul entirely, on the merits of the atonement for pardon and acceptance with God. This, no one will do, until he has been led to feel his undone, and helpless condition, as a sinner against God, deserving his wrath and curse, and momentarily exposed to suffer it; without any possibility of removing the penalty, by any

obedience which he can render. From this condition, Christ offers to deliver the sinner, by virtue of what he has done, if the sinner will, in the manner, already described, trust himself in his hands. This yielding up the soul into his hands, and resting it there, for salvation, is the *faith* which the gospel demands. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,—He that believeth shall be saved."

For the purpose of illustrating the nature of this faith, let me suppose a case. A man is seen hanging by a twig on the brink of a fearful precipice. From this condition, it is impossible for him to extricate himself. Nor will his strength long hold out, to maintain his position; and if it would, the twig is liable to break at any moment, and precipitate him into the abyss below. While in this situation, a benevolent individual comes to his relief, and, extending his arms underneath him, says, *let go your hold now, drop into my arms, and I will save you.* This proposi-

tion is easily understood. But the man does not, at once, yield, for several reasons. He may not entirely have despaired of rescuing himself. And while an expectation of this kind, remains, he would not, of course, be anxious to avail himself of such an offer. Or, he may not feel, that there is any necessity of complying immediately; or he may think it possible that the friend who makes the offer, may not be *able* to rescue him, even should he let go his hold and drop; or he may fail to do it, even if able, through some inadvertence. Any, or all, of these, may prevent his compliance. But supposing that he is satisfied, that he cannot rescue himself, that he cannot maintain his hold much longer, and that the twig may break at any moment;—what now will prevent his compliance? ‘If I let go, says he to himself, my whole dependance is thrown on the veracity, and faithfulness of this friend; and he *may* fail of fulfilling his promise. Between my letting go, and reaching his arms,—

there may, it is true, be but a *moment*,—but it is long enough to allow of a *possibility* of failure;—for he may, at that very instant withdraw his arms, and then I am lost. If I could feel myself *in* his arms, before I let go,—I would not hesitate a moment.’ At the same time, the friend repeats his assurance, ‘let go your hold, *drop* into my arms, now, and I will rescue you.’ But he hesitates. Now why is this? Simply, because he has not *full confidence*, that the pledge will be redeemed: in other words, he does not fully *believe* it. It is *faith* that is wanting. This shows just what faith is. It is letting go the twig, *trusting* to the promise. Hence you see the reason,—if faith is to be tried,—why the individual should not be allowed to feel himself already in the arms of his friend, before he quits his hold; it would exhibit no *trust*,—the very thing that is to be called forth. If he must feel himself out of danger, *before he will let go*, does it not show an absolute *distrust*? and

is he not, thus, casting a reflection upon the veracity and faithfulness of this benevolent individual?

But we may view this illustration in another point of light. Suppose the individual who makes the offer, has been an early friend, and benefactor of the other;—received him into his family, adopted him as a son,—and kindly nurtured him from infancy to manhood, with all the kindness of a father's heart; and for all this, he has received only unkindness, ingratitude, hostility, and abuse. Efforts to reclaim him, have been made, but have proved ineffectual. Now, after all this, finding him in this condition of exposure, and brought there by his own folly—the pledge of rescue is made, if he will only ‘let go his hold, and drop into the arms of his generous, but abused benefactor.’ If he will now, so trust in his word, as to *let go, and drop*, he shows that very kind of FAITH that is demanded of the sinner, as a condition of salvation. “BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

The sinner has been thus ungrateful, and rebellious against God, his unwearied Benefactor; and has richly deserved to be cast off forever. But God, in the person of Jesus Christ, now comes forward, and offers to rescue him, if he will let go the twig, to which he is clinging, and *drop* into his arms. How reasonable the demand for *faith*.—How deserving Christ is, of that very confidence, which should lead the sinner to *let go*, and *drop*,—trusting his soul, wholly, and entirely, to the faithfulness of Him who hath promised.—This is demanded.

But, suppose the individual will not let go, and trust himself entirely to the veracity of his benefactor,—and the entreaty is urged, “*let go now*, and you shall be rescued;”—but he *distrusts* the promise, he will not yield;—would you not say, that he deserved to be let alone, to suffer his fate? And is the sinner less guilty, who will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? What a natural fitness is there, in the so-

lemn declaration, "he that believeth, shall be saved; but he that *believeth not* shall be *damned*." Will he not deserve it?

This is evangelical faith. Reader have you exercised it? Have you let go your hold of every thing beside, and cast your soul on the mercy, and faithfulness of Jesus Christ? The person who has done it, is a Christian. He who has not done it, is not a Christian.

Let me now ask your attention to what is commonly called

"THE FAITH OF ASSURANCE."

The most simple definition which I can give of this, is, *a full, unwavering belief of the Christian, that HE shall be saved*. This, it will be perceived, is distinct from evangelical faith. It is possible for the latter to exist, without the faith of assurance, i. e., a person may have cast his soul on the mercy of God in Christ, and yet may feel that he has not sufficient evidence of

it; and may, therefore, *not* feel *assured* that *he* shall be saved. It is a great favor, to have a *gospel* assurance that we shall be saved. But it is not every kind of assurance of salvation, that will answer this description.

FALSE ASSURANCE.

1. That assurance of salvation, which is based *solely* on the fact of the *goodness* and *mercy of God*, is not a gospel assurance. That God is *good*, and *merciful*, is fully admitted, but this does not prove that any particular sinner will be saved; because it does not prove that that particular sinner will repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the goodness and mercy of God, which have made salvation possible on those terms.—But it does not follow of course, that every sinner will comply. They have not all complied,—although God is so good;—and they can continue longer, to stand out, in

their rejection of the gospel, just as they have done; and no one can say, in relation to any particular individual, that he will not actually die in that state. And if he does, has not Christ declared that he shall, at last, be doomed to go away into everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels?—If *they* shall be eternally banished from the presence and favor of God,—is there any thing to show that the sinner will not be, who has *rejected* the mercy of God in the gospel?

2. That assurance of personal salvation, is ill founded, which rests solely on the fact that Christ “tasted death for every man.” He did taste death for every man, but it was in such a way, as not, of itself, to make it certain that *any* would be saved. The atonement, by the death of Christ, was made, to render it proper for God to pardon sin; and He tasted death for all, inasmuch as the door of mercy is now open, in consequence of that death, and all are invited to comply with the terms; and if

they do comply, they will be saved. But the simple fact that Christ died for all, does not, of itself, insure the salvation of any; because it does not ensure their compliance with the demands of the Gospel. Whether all will comply, is to be decided by other proof. The spirit of the text under consideration is happily illustrated by another; "God so loved the *world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoso *believeth* in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The compassion of God flowed forth towards a "world" of ruined sinners, but will the "*world*" be saved as a consequence of this?—"that whoso *believeth* in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—The fact, then, that Christ tasted death for every man, does not prove that every man will repent, and believe, and therefore does not prove that every man will be saved. If *your* assurance of salvation, dear reader, rests solely on the fact, that Christ died for all, you may never be saved.

3. That assurance of salvation, which

rests solely on the fact, that God "*will* have all men to be saved," is groundless.

The term "*will*," here used, is synonymous with *willing* or *desirous*. But the fact that God is *willing*, or *desirous* that all should be saved, does not prove that all *will* be saved; because they may resist all the influences which God will bring, to lead them to repent,—and if they do, they will go down to death. Besides, God "*wills*" in the same sense, or is *willing* or *desires*, that all should "come to the knowledge of the truth," as he does, that, all should be saved. But facts show, that all have *not* come to the knowledge of the truth, and, as such are dying continually, there is no certainty, that they ever will,—the desire of God notwithstanding. This proves nothing in regard to the result.—Men are not very scrupulous in conforming to the desires, or wishes, of God.—He may sincerely desire, that every sinner would repent, immediately; but he may not deem it wise and best, to use all

that influence, which the perverseness, and obstinacy of man render necessary, to secure the result. Rather than do this, he may deem it best to leave them to their own refusal.

4. That person who rests *his* assurance of salvation, on the bare fact that God does not “take *pleasure* in the death of the wicked,” has no foundation at all for it.

A Judge may not take *pleasure* in the death of a criminal, but he may pass the sentence of the law, notwithstanding, and order its execution. But to test the principle, on which this assurance is built; viz. that if God does not take *pleasure* in the death of the sinner, he will not die eternally;—it may be remarked, that God either does, or does not, take pleasure in sin. If he does, where is his *holiness*? Can it be shown that he possesses it, any more than wicked men, or devils, who take pleasure in sin? But, if he does *not* take pleasure in sin, then, according to the argument,

there is no such thing as sin, in existence. Again, God either does, or does not, take *pleasure* in the present *suffering* of his creatures. If he does, he is a *malevolent* Being. If he does not, then, according to this argument for assurance, there is no such thing as present suffering, and pain! Because, if God does not take pleasure in an event, it will not take place. What an admirable method this would be, to get rid of all the present suffering and pain, that afflict humanity. Is not the argument just as conclusive, in the one case, as in the other? Does it appear certain, then, dear reader, that, if God does not take *pleasure* in the death of the wicked, none of them will perish in their sins?

5. Is that assurance of being saved, a gospel assurance, that rests solely, upon the fact, that God has *power* to convert, and save all men?

The fact that he has power to convert any individual sinner, does not prove that he will convert him; any more than the

fact that God can annihilate him, proves that he will do it. He may have wise and benevolent reasons for not exerting power, which he *could* exert; whether he has disclosed, or ever will disclose them to us, or not. He will do all that He judges wise and best, to bring sinners to lay down the weapons of their rebellion; and he will do enough to stop the mouth of every sinner, at the day of judgment, who remains impenitent. And God, we have no reason to doubt, would be better pleased with the conduct of men, if they would *all* repent, and love him, with the means of grace which they have, than he is, with the continued impenitence, and final perdition of any. But that he *can do more* for any, does not prove that he will,—any more than the fact, that he can do more to make them rich, and happy, proves that he will do it. Who, then, would be willing to risk his assurance of reaching heaven, at last, on the mere fact, that God has *power* to convert and save all men? Is it not possi-

ble, that he may, at last, say to some
Because I have called and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and ye have not regarded, therefore, I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh?"

GOSPEL ASSURANCE.

But, a gospel assurance of salvation, is based upon good evidence that the person has complied with the terms of the gospel, and is, in fact, a real Christian; and also, on the definite, and unambiguous pledge of God, in his word. As this assurance rests, in the first place, on evidence of being a Christian, of course, it would be strong, or weak, just in proportion to the fulness, or scantiness of this evidence.— On the subject of *evidence*, too, a person may mistake. He may think himself a Christian, when he is not, in fact; and may, on the other hand, sometimes conclude that he is not a Christian, when

he is; owing to the manner in which he looks at evidence, at the time. The method of obtaining a well-grounded assurance, according to this view, is, to live so holy, and devoted a life, that there shall be no room to doubt the fact of being a Christian. Let a person do this,—and *be* really a Christian, and his assurance of being saved *then*, rests on the simple truth of God. “There is, therefore, *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” “My sheep,” says Christ, himself, “hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and *I give unto them eternal life, AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH.*” The truth is, the sheep of Christ may sometimes wander, and need to be chastised back to the fold, but *they never become goats!*—they remain SHEEP *all the way to Heaven:* and the Shepherd’s pledge is, “THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH.” Is not here ground for assurance, firmer than the “everlasting hills?” It is not because they

cannot sin,—and continue in sin till they die; but they *will* not, because they will be “kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.”

These, reader, are the grounds of *assurance*; the assurance of salvation taught in the Bible. You see that it is a Scriptural doctrine. And it is the duty, and privilege, of every Christian so to live, that he may have this assurance. Nor is it, as some suppose, a dangerous doctrine, adapted to lead to carelessness and licentiousness. The fact is, if a person were to give loose to vicious appetites and passions, on the assumption that he is a Christian, and therefore cannot fail of heaven; he would furnish the most unequivocal evidence that he is an utter stranger to the religion of the Gospel. The *character* of those, for whom “there is now no condemnation,” is described,—they “walk *not* after the flesh; but *after the Spirit*.” Let no man therefore deceive himself.

To sum up the whole; from what has

been said, it is evident that I may know, *if* I am a Christian, that I shall be saved;—and if I can know that I *am* a Christian, then I *can know that I shall be saved.*—But I cannot know that I am a Christian, unless I lead a life devoted to God; and hence, without such a life, I cannot have assurance that I shall be saved.

LETTER VI.

PRAYER.

THIS is one of the most interesting facts in the history of a new born soul; and I had almost said, one of the very first exercises. Others may pray, but the prayers of the real Christian, only, are acceptable to God; because he, only, has the feelings which God approves. Having called your attention, in the two preceding letters, to the subjects of *repentance*, and *faith*, it is thought that the most appropriate place for the consideration of the subject of *prayer*, is the present communication; and then we shall be prepared, to consider, in connection, the subject of benevolent *effort*, as concluding the brief hints which I intend, at present, to suggest.

In relation to prayer, the most simple definition is,

“Prayer is the *soul's sincere desire*,
Unuttered, or expressed.”

It is the *desire of the heart*, ascending to God, whether in the use of words, or without them. Nothing else is prayer.—Men may have forms, and repeat them; or may, without forms, make use of the most elegant extempore language, in the form of addresses to God, without *praying* at all. If the language made use of, expresses the *desires* of their hearts, it is prayer. If not, it is solemn mockery—and would be *abomination* in the sight of God. How much sin, must have been committed, in the professed addresses to God, even of those who claim to be Christians! How often does the judgment dictate the language used,—instead of the feelings of the heart? The language expresses what we know we *ought* to desire, rather than what we *do* desire. This is not prayer.

Hence, it will be seen that there may be a wide difference between *asking* God for blessings, and *praying* for them. We may *desire* the things asked for; but we may ask for things which we do not desire. So God may grant us blessings which we desire, and yet not grant the particular things asked for. A hungry child comes to your door, and asks for *bread*,—but he desires food of any kind, adapted to his necessities. Now, if you should not give him bread,—but something equally good, or better for him; although you would not give him what he asked for; yet you would, what he desired; for he asked for bread; but he desired *food* of any suitable kind:—and as he has *food*, he has just what he *desired*. His desire might include bread; but it did not exclude other things that would answer the same purpose.

With these preliminary remarks on the subject, it may be observed, that prayer is both a *duty* and a *privilege*. It is the *duty* of every individual, whether saint or sin-

ner. "I will therefore," says the Apostle, "that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath, and doubting." It is not merely the *duty* of *Christians* to pray, but the duty of "men," *as men*, as the subjects of God's moral government, and his dependant creatures; and hence the duty of all men. But the *manner* in which they must pray, is pointed out:—"lifting up *holy* hands," &c. No prayer is acceptable to Him, or is offered as he requires, unless offered in this manner. Again, after making promises of spiritual, as well as temporal blessings to the Jews, God distinctly asserts, "I will, yet for this, be inquired of, by the house of Israel, to do it for them." But "the house of Israel," was the whole nation, and the only nation, that was acquainted with the true God. It was thus made the duty of *all such*, to plead with God, for those blessings, which he had expressed his readiness to bestow; not merely the duty of the few, actively pious; but the duty of all who are made acquainted

with his will. Such are bound to pray for the blessings of God's providence and grace, not only upon themselves, but upon others.

I ask then, reader, whether prayer is not your duty? If you are a Christian, I know you must admit it. But if you are not a Christian, is it not your duty to pray? Are you not bound to thank God for the blessings you receive from his hand?—to ask him for the blessings you need?—both for the soul, and the body? Can you think of his munificent goodness,—of his forbearance and long-suffering, and then of your own ingratitude, and multiplied offences, without feeling that you ought to go, and confess your sins to God, and implore his pardoning mercy? With so much guilt, as you have contracted, can you refuse to do this, without enhancing that guilt? I appeal, then, to your conscience, whether prayer is not *your* duty? Admitting that you are not a Christian; that you do not love God, does this justify you in not pleading, in prayer, for this mercy? Can you

think of bringing such a plea to the judgment seat?—that the reason why you never asked for pardon, was, that you did not love God's character! Would you not shudder at the thought of such a plea! I ask then, does the fact that you are not a Christian, justify you in your neglect of prayer? Is not the fact that you have lived to the present moment, without giving your heart to God, a reason why you *should* pray for mercy? But let me not be understood to recommend *impenitent prayers*; or prayer with an impenitent heart. Such prayers God reprobates, as "ABOMINATION" in his sight; nay, he expressly forbids such solemn mockery: "Bring *no more* vain oblations." "When ye spread forth your hands, before me, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many *prayers*, I will not hear."

Although it is the duty of every sinner, now impenitent, to pray; yet he has no right to do this, or any thing else, with an impenitent heart, but with *penitence* for

sin. Not only are the sacrifices of the wicked an abomination to the Lord, but “the *ploughing* of the wicked is sin,” and “the thoughts of the wicked are abomination to the Lord.” Every thing he does, and says, and feels, is wrong in God’s view, because he has no regard to the glory of his Maker; and no desire to please him. But what shall the sinner do? Not cease acting; but begin to act *right*, and begin now! He is to love God, and repent of sin, immediately; and *in the exercise* of these feelings, he is bound to pray, and perform every other duty. Is not prayer, then, a *present duty* binding upon *every* individual? And is impenitence any better excuse for not performing this duty, than it is for committing any other sin? God “now commands all men every where to repent;” and in the exercise of this penitence, it is the present duty of all men every where, to pray.

Reason would seem to dictate, that, from a sense of want, and of dependence on

God, prayer would be the very method to express our wants, and seek for needed favors. But God has emphatically constituted it the channel of communication between him and his people, through which, their desires ascend to him, and bring down blessings, for the body and the soul,—for time, and for eternity.

The person, therefore, who refuses, or neglects, to pray, cuts himself off from these communications of grace and love which God delights to afford his people. But it is not only a duty, but ought to be regarded as an unspeakable privilege, to unbosom the heart to God, at a throne of grace. *Love* prompts to this. The *society* of the friend beloved, is sought by us; and as there is no way in which we can make so near an approach to God, and enjoy so much communion with him, as in prayer, if we love him, we shall feel that we cannot be denied the privilege.

“Prayer is the Christian’s *vital breath*,
The Christian’s native air.”

Repentance will prompt to this duty.— When sorry that we have done wrong, in disobeying, we shall not feel like resting a moment, until we have pleaded, for forgiveness of that Being, whom we have offended; and as we are daily, and hourly offending; so our heart will learn the art of “*praying always*, with all prayer, and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.” O what a sweetness, what a preciousness there is, in coming to a throne of grace, melted down in contrition for sin. In this respect emphatically

“ ’Tis he who knows the worth of prayer,
That wishes to be often there.”

But *faith* is an ingredient in the feelings which lead to a throne of grace. It is the confidence with which a child goes to a kind, affectionate parent, for the favors which are needed. And this confidence is sanctioned by the requisition of inspiration. “He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is the *rewarder* of

them that diligently seek him." "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth," &c. This is ground for the exercise of faith, in prayer to God. Love, penitence, and faith, then, are combined in leading to a throne of grace. And these very graces are strengthened by the performance of this duty, and every needed blessing is secured. Prayer

" Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above."

What an indication does that individual furnish of a low state, or want of piety, who demands a distinct and formal requirement to pray in his family, or in any other suitable place. It seems that he is determined to do no more than he can possibly help, in religious duties, lest perhaps, he should be accused of being righteous overmuch;—and the solicitude often seems to be,—how much may be neglected

without incurring the censure of disobeying a positive requirement! Such a spirit will never fit a soul for Heaven. To love, and serve God, are not made the great business of life; but things to be attended to, like the taking of medicines in sickness,—for the sake of the benefit to be derived from them. No matter what such an individual's profession, or character, may be, otherwise, he ought not to indulge the thought of reaching Heaven, in this state. I know it is sometimes said, I cannot find time to perform this duty, or that;—but for what was time given us, but to perform the duties which we owe to God, as well as to our fellow-men, and ourselves? A man might just as well plead, that he could not find time to *eat*; as that he cannot find time to pray,—to mention but one duty among others. The truth is, all such excuses speak a language of no uncertain character, in relation to the piety of the individual. Prayer, has, with not a little justice, been termed the "*Thermometer*"

of a Christian's piety. Compare your feelings and exercises, dear reader, with what has been said, above, and where on the scale, must you look for the indication in regard to your condition?

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE.

But in relation to prayer, there is one fundamental principle which I cannot forbear noticing on the present occasion. It is this;—*no appropriate effort for the attainment of the blessing sought, which God has put within our reach, should be neglected, when we pray.* In regard to temporal things, this proposition needs no illustration. A man is sick, and prays for health, but he does not think it unnecessary to make use of remedies to accomplish his object. Suppose the house of your neighbor was on fire, and instead of using any efforts to extinguish the flames, where the lives of his wife and children are jeopardized, he simply kneels down and prays

that God will put out the fire. What would you think of such a man? Or suppose a child falls into a stream, and the father, instead of making any efforts to rescue him, prays that God will save him from a watery grave! What would be thought of the sanity of that man? Or what would be thought of the man who should pray that God would give him a plentiful harvest, while he neither ploughs, nor sows! The principle in these supposed cases, which is obviously violated, is the one already named. The appropriate means, which God has placed within their reach, to secure the accomplishment of the objects prayed for, are not used, and hence, the inconsistency of the prayer. But the principle is not confined, in its application, to prayer for temporal things; if prayer be made for the conversion of a friend, or neighbor, all those means which God has put within our reach, to bring truth before the mind, and lead him to think on his ways, must be used; or we have no evidence of the sincerity of our

prayers. Or, if we pray for the conversion of the world, all the means which God has placed within our reach to send the Gospel to every creature, must be used,—or we fail to show that we are sincere, in our prayers.

LETTER VII.

BENEVOLENT EFFORTS.

THE grand object of the benevolent effort of the Christian church is, to bring men to Christ. And this has high sanction. To open the way for this, was the object which brought the Son of God from heaven, to assume our nature, that he might, in that nature, make such an offering,—such a sacrifice for sin, that God could be *just*, as well as merciful, in its forgiveness, on condition of repentance and faith. And having opened the door of mercy to the lost,—his last command to his disciples was, “go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” This was to be their great business;—the business of their lives;—the business and the duty of the church

in all coming ages, until the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth, as the waters do the sea. To convert men to Christ, is not only the great object for which the Christian ministry has been instituted, but for which the Holy Spirit is given, to make them *willing* in the day of God's power;—and the object for which Missionary, Bible, Education, and Tract, as well as other Societies, are instituted, and are laboring. It is the conversion of sinners,—the conversion of the world.

ON WHOM RESTS THE OBLIGATION.

The question, now is, dear reader, will *you* enter into this work, and determine, with God's blessing, to bring sinners to give up their hearts to their Maker?—Whether you have ever tasted, and seen that the Lord is gracious, and hope that *your* sins have been forgiven, or not, this is your duty. I am aware that this work has generally been regarded, as belonging

exclusively to the Church. But why is the Church, any more exclusively, under obligation to labor to convert men, than she is to be honest, or kind, or benevolent? I admit, the command of Christ, "go teach all nations," was given to his *disciples*: but this no more proves that it is their duty *exclusively*, than the command "be ye merciful," addressed to the disciples, proves that none but Christians are under obligations to be merciful. Christians may be under *peculiar* obligations to obey the injunctions of Christ; but this does not exclude others from obligations to obey.

The truth is, God has laid all the obligations and sanctions of his eternal law, and his blessed Gospel, upon the conscience of every human sinner, whether penitent or impenitent; and no one can run away from these obligations, any more than he can run away from the power and necessity of thinking, or consciousness. It is true, that a right state of *feeling* is supposed to be necessary to the acceptable performance of some of these; but I aver

that it is necessary to the performance of *any*, and *all* these duties. It is admitted that a man cannot pray acceptably, without love to God, and penitence for sin; nor can he attend to any of his worldly business, or even think without sinning, if he does not do it from supreme love to God, and regard to his glory. Not only, are "the sacrifices of the wicked, abomination to the Lord," but "the *ploughing* of the wicked is sin;" and "the *thoughts* of the wicked are abomination." But what would you think of the person who should declare that he would not *plough*, or even *think*! because he committed sin, in not doing it from right motives! If he sins when he prays, without love to God; so does he when he ploughs, or thinks. And he may just as wisely resolve to cease doing the latter, as the former. I ask then, dear reader, whether you will engage in the work of attempting to persuade sinners to become reconciled to God? You cannot, surely, hesitate, because the work is not

sufficiently important, to demand the effort. It is the salvation of a SOUL;—a soul of more value than ten thousand worlds like this! It is an object of such importance, that it brought the Son of God from Heaven, for its redemption,—for which, he subjected himself to a life of poverty, reproach, and toil,—to the agony, and bloody sweat of Gethsemane;—and the untold, unutterable sufferings of Calvary, which threw a pall of mourning over the face of day, and convulsed the deep foundations of the trembling earth,

“ When God, the mighty Maker died,
For man—the creature’s sin!”

Is there not an importance attached to a soul, the redemption of which, has cost so much?

But look at the benevolent feelings of Heaven. Not a single sinner on the footstool is brought to lay down the weapons of his rebellion, however poor, or degraded, or guilty he may be, but another hymn of

praise, is chanted in immortal strains,—and a deeper, and more rapturous tide of joy spreads through all the heavenly world, than is felt, for the simple continuance in holiness, of ninety and nine, who have never sinned, and who need no repentance! I ask then, whether, by attempting to lead sinners to repentance, you are not willing to furnish fresh cause for rejoicing, among the angels, and the redeemed around the throne of God? Will you not engage in a work which enlists all the sympathies of of Heaven in its favor?

But *from what* is a soul saved, that is converted to God? I answer in one word, from eternal suffering, and eternal sinning.

In the first, is included, all that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, which God has threatened to pour out upon all the finally incorrigible, through the endless duration of their future existence. In the second, viz:—eternally sinning,—there is something truly appalling! When viewed in its proper light, a single sin,

against the God of the universe, has a moral turpitude, and a desert of ill, which none but God can fully, and properly estimate. But the enormity is fearfully increased, by the multiplied offences of years, by which, the sinner is emphatically said to "TREASURE UP wrath against the day of wrath." But even this course of sin is sometimes broken off, by repentance, and faith; and then the scene changes for a happy eternity. But there is no breaking off from sin in eternity;—he that at death is filthy, will forever remain filthy. The restraints of God's providence and grace will, then, all be withdrawn, and rebellion, —eternal rebellion will enlist the obstinate unyielding energies of every unreclaimed sinner forever. To convert a sinner, therefore, you not only rescue him from eternal suffering, but you save him from a course of eternal rebellion against the God of the universe. Let him go on a little longer, and, by the abandonment of God, he will be forever fixed in that rebellion.

Reader, can you want inducements to put forth your immediate, and unceasing efforts, to convert sinners around you, from the error of their ways, and lead them to make their peace with God? What must be thought of your benevolence, your humanity,—nay, rather your destitution of all the best feelings of our nature, if you will put forth no effort for this object? I put it to your conscience, my dear friend, what *ought* you to do? Are you not bound to love your neighbor as yourself? And could you feel grateful, if a fellow creature, knowing your condition of exposure to the wrath of God, and, to be an eternal enemy to, and rebel against Him, would not raise a warning voice, to arouse you, from your lethargy, and urge you to make your escape? What then is your duty, on this subject?

Do you say, that if you were a Christian, you would not hesitate to enter into this work with all your might, but, that you cannot do it *now*?—that you are an impeni-

tent sinner yourself, and that this excuses you? No, reader, it is no justification, no excuse. Is the fact, that you do not love God, and have not repented of your sins, a justification for not doing good to your fellow creatures? Can you make one sin, a justification of another? Or, will you say, it is no *sin* in you, not to raise your warning voice to prevent your fellow creatures from going down to hell? If a soul perishes through your refusal to do your duty, you will not wish to meet that soul at the judgment seat of Christ! You will not wish to hear what he will say of you through eternity!

But you ask, ‘shall I go, while I *remain impenitent*, and try to persuade others to repent?’ Your duty, in regard to this, is precisely the same, that it is in relation to prayer. It is your duty *to pray now*; but to pray with penitence for sin, and love to God. Nothing can justify you for neglecting the duty a single hour. It is just so, in relation to the other subject. Set about the work of

bringing others to Christ, in the very *exercise of penitence* for your own sins, and love, to God's character. You have no right to defer that work for this; or this work for that. They ought both to be done; and done now. And God will not excuse you, if you refuse to do either. Let me repeat the statement of the truth; every sinner, now impenitent, is under the most solemn obligation to do all in his power, to convert the sinners around him, and to convert the world. This is not only the duty of those who are Christians, but of those who are not Christians,—and they, as well as Christians, are answerable to God for every soul that perishes through their unfaithfulness. Whether, then, dear reader, you are penitent or impenitent, God calls upon you, to enter with *right* feelings into the work of persuading sinners to become reconciled to God, with all the energies of your soul; and a responsibility rests upon you, which you cannot shake off. Will you come up, then, to the point of duty?

You are familiar with the prayer of Dives in hell, that "Lazarus might be sent to warn his brethren, of their danger,"—as well, as with the reason he assigned, "lest they also come into this place of torment." Now, I have no idea, that this request was prompted by any feelings of benevolence, for such feelings have no existence there. But the simple truth, undoubtedly is, that having himself exerted a powerful influence upon his brethren, to render them regardless of their spiritual interests, and of their future prospects, he knew, that their coming into the same place of torment, to be the companions of his sufferings, would only increase *his* wretchedness to a still more insupportable degree. From a merely *selfish* consideration, therefore, he might make the request. He had occasion to dread their companionship in hell, if by his own influence he had contributed to prepare them for it; or had not discharged his duty, in warning them to avoid it. Supposing, then, dear reader,

what I hope, and trust is not the fact, that you, not only, are not a Christian, but have deliberately made up your mind never to attend to the subject, but to neglect your immortal interests, and go down to perdition, as you are; even on such a supposition, would you not, from a regard,—I will not say to your own *peace* in hell!—but, to the lessening of your eternal wretchedness, labor to prevent sinners from going to the same place of suffering and woe? The example of every sinner who remains impenitent, is encouraging others in the same course, so that it will, with truth, be finally said of each, “That man perished not *alone* in his iniquity.” The only way for you to counteract this influence, if you determine not to turn to God yourself, is, to urge them to act with more wisdom, and repent, before it be forever too late! From hell, you can never make your voice heard, by those you have left behind you; nor will any messenger be sent back, at your request, to warn your companions in

sin. While, therefore, you are in life, though you have already entered within the eddying whirl of that vortex, that will soon engulph you, raise your warning voice, and cry to those approaching it, *stand off!* STAND OFF!! if you would not go down, with me, to the woes of the second death!

But let me not be understood to urge this duty upon those who have *not* formed this desperate resolution, because of yourself, you can convert a single sinner. The planting of Paul, and watering of Apollos, will be in vain, without the blessing of God. He, and He only, can give the increase. But how does he give it;—*with* the planting of Paul, and watering of Apollos? or, without them? Because *you* cannot make a blade of grain to grow, would you refuse to plough and sow? “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand, for thou knowest not, whether shall prosper, either this, or that; or whether both shall be alike

good." This is all the encouragement which the farmer has, or can have; he cannot make a single kernel of grain grow,—for this, he is entirely dependent on God. And he does not *know* whether God will make this, or that kernel grow; or whether he will not make them both grow;—hence, the necessity, and encouragement too, not only of sowing, but of being *diligent*; of beginning early, and working late; *because* he "knows not whether shall prosper, either this, or that: or whether both may not be alike good." And this is all the encouragement, dear reader, which you need, to enlist all your energies and efforts, to secure the conversion, and salvation of souls. You know not whether God will bless *this* effort, or *that*; or whether he may not bless them *both*. With such encouragement, surely, you will not hesitate, if you have a particle of the spirit of Christ; or the benevolence of the gospel. You recollect that as soon as Andrew had become acquainted with Christ, his first solicitude was

to make Simon, also, acquainted with him; "he first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found the Messiah." So likewise, Philip, as soon as he was called to follow Christ, "findeth Nathaniel," and was instrumental in bringing him acquainted with Christ. The same trait is also visible in the history of the woman of Samaria. As soon as she had her heart brought under the renewing, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, she left the well, water-pot and all, and hastened to the city, with the message, "Come, see a man that told me all the things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" And she persuaded the whole city to come out, and become acquainted with the Savior of sinners. Now this was acting out the very spirit of the gospel,—the spirit that will exist, wherever genuine religion takes possession of the heart. It seeks to bring others into the same kingdom, to become acquainted with the same Savior, and travel the same road towards

Heaven. Their desire, and prayer is, that Christ may be formed in them, the hope of glory. Now, reader, will you labor for this? He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death;—a soul of more value than a thousand worlds like this. Is not this an object worth laboring to accomplish? It will honor Christ;—will glorify God, and roll a wave of the purest joy, over all the heavenly world. Do you ask what you can do? You can converse with those who are out of Christ, in your family,—and in your neighborhood. You can place in the hands of others, some tract, or religious book, that is adapted to lead them to think on their ways, and urge them to the Savior. You can pray with, and for them, and preach to their hearts and consciences, by a holy, exemplary life; and they will feel it.

Labor not to make them Presbyterians, or Episcopalians, or Baptists, or Methodists; but to make them *Christians*, the sincere

followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. Do not throw off the responsibility upon your minister, or elders, or deacons, or upon the Church itself. To their own Master they stand or fall. But enter into the work *yourself*; without waiting for others. And discharge your duty with as much fidelity, as if you were the only one on earth, to take the part of God, and urge sinners to become reconciled to him. Do this, yourself, and you will take the most effectual method to arouse the attention of other Christians to the subject; and you may be instrumental in the conversion and salvation of some precious souls. Begin the work in earnest,—with faith and prayer. Hold up to your view the condition of sinners, just as the Bible represents it, under the wrath and curse of God, and momentarily exposed to sink down to an endless perdition; and *can* you,—*will* you, refuse to raise your warning voice, and urge them to escape the wrath to come? And while you do this, feel that you will agonise in prayer

for the blessing of God upon your labors, until death, or the blessing comes. Should you begin thus, and labor thus, it might be the commencement of the outpouring of God's Spirit, and of a great ingathering of souls into the kingdom of God. If you fail, or refuse to do this, such an event may not take place. A tremendous responsibility then may rest upon you, which might well make an angel tremble. O, then, let me ask you, in God's presence, and in God's name, will you discharge your duty?

THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.

But I would not have you *confine* your sympathy, or efforts, to the objects of interest, immediately around you. There is a world lying in wickedness, under the curse of God, that must be converted thro' the instrumentality of human effort. And every friend of Jesus Christ is called upon, by a voice that cannot be disregarded, with impunity, to enter into this work. And

there can be no neutrality in this concern. "He that is not with me, is against me," is the thrilling declaration of the Son of God, himself. The soldier who refuses to march, when the order is given, is guilty of insubordination; and it may be under such circumstances, as to be construed into treachery to the cause, in which he is enlisted. Such soldiers, Jesus Christ will not own here, or hereafter. "Onward," is the word of command. "ONWARD," must be their motto. The marshalled hosts of God's elect, must put forth one stronger, mightier, holier, and more undying effort than has ever yet been made, before the god of this world will abdicate his throne, and quit his usurped dominions. Are *you* prepared, then, as one, to make the onset, and stand your ground, until a voice from Heaven, shall bid you, "come up higher?"

I have urged you to commence your effort in the cause of benevolence, by laboring for the conversion of souls around you; because the feeling that will lead to it, is

the feeling that is needed in efforts for the conversion of the world. I know not how it is possible to feel right, in relation to the salvation of the heathen, when no interest is felt, and no efforts are made, for the conversion of those around us, who are hastening to perdition, with a hundred, nay, a thousand fold more guilt, than the millions who have never heard of a Savior. Hence, when the work of God is revived, the eye of the Christian affects his heart,—what he sees *around* him, of the rebellion, stupidity, and danger of the ungodly, leads him to put forth his sympathy and efforts for *their* salvation; and then he is prepared to feel, and to act, for the salvation of a world. While, therefore, you ought to begin at home, in the manner already urged; let me say, do not stop there,—if you do, you stop short of discharging your duty. The millions, perishing, in all the guilt, and wretchedness of Paganism are calling loudly for your sympathy, efforts, and prayers. And there is an *urgency* in

the case. In thirty years, one whole generation of 600,000,000 of Pagan souls will have gone into eternity; this would amount to an average of 20,000,000, in a year; and more than 1,600,000 from one monthly concert to another! O, is this alarming fact, pondered by those who statedly, or occasionally attend that deeply interesting meeting? If it were, could they feel satisfied in *doing* no more to rescue them from going down to death? What fields are opening, —what calls for help, are sounding in the ears of the Christian church. O, shall not the Bread of Life be sent to the millions that are perishing? China which contains a population of more than 300,000,000, is now perfectly accessible by means of Bibles and Tracts. Why should not truth be poured in upon the thick darkness that has so long brooded over that empire of sin? why, —when they are a reading people, and are so eager to become acquainted with the Christian Scriptures, and Christian truth? And you, reader, may reach them there;—

if you do not go in person, you may be instrumental in communicating to them, the knowledge of eternal life, and of preparing them for Heaven. But China is not the only portion of the world that is calling for the Bread of Life,—there are millions in Europe, Asia, Africa, in our own country, and in the Islands of the Sea, that must perish in the darkness of heathenism, unless saved, through the instrumentality of Christian effort, by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Dear reader, have you time, talents, property, or influence? Use them, as you will wish you had, when you come to stand at the judgment seat. What will they all be worth to you, when the world is on fire, and the elements are melting with fervent heat? Balance it all against a soul that might have been saved, had you been faithful to your Savior, but is now lost, lost forever! What, dear reader, will Christ think of you, if you stand idle now? What will angels—O, what will lost heathen think of

you at the day of judgment if you suffer them to perish in ignorance of the provisions of mercy? And O, what will you then think of yourself? Would you not want to find some corner of the universe, where you could hide away from every eye, and weep over the guilt of your unfaithfulness, before you would feel ready to commence your everlasting song? O, act, with your eye on those affecting scenes, and be AN ACTIVE, CONSISTENT, BIBLE CHRISTIAN; AND LET ALL DO IT,—AND EARTH WOULD KEEP ONE GRAND JUBILEE OF PRAISE TO GOD.—
WILL YOU DO IT? WILL YOU DO IT,
NOW? FAREWELL.







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